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U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
N.D. OF ALABAMA

District Judge (Federal)/ U.S. District Court  
The Honorable Madeline Hughes Haikala  
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama  
Hugo L. Black U. S. Courthouse  
1729 Fifth Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Judge Haikala,

I respectfully request that when approving the Huntsville City School desegregation consent order, you consider allowing high school students to stay in their current school. The rezoned plan will require my son who is thriving, active and successful to change schools his junior year. This move means going from a known to an unknown losing all knowledge gained from being active in his school. Moving at this point will have a significant impact academically, athletically and emotionally.

Studies show, moving a teen during the latter part of high school can have serious academic, social, and psychological consequences that should be taken into consideration. In general, the older the child, the more difficulty he or she will have with the move. For our family, a move interrupts friendships that were developed in the elementary school years. Our son must get used to a different schedule, curriculum, teachers and coaches, and may be ahead in certain subjects and behind in others. His last two years of high school could completely be derailed because the situation can cause stress, anxiousness or boredom.

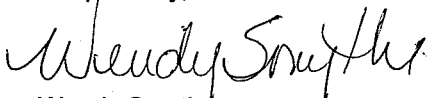
Extracurricular activities also play a significant role in defining a high school student. A student who has worked hard to excel in school community service, sports or music may find it impossible to participate in the same way when he or she moves. This can have a significant impact on opportunities and dreams for life after high school.

For us, a forced transfer of my will impact my son's opportunity for valuable leadership opportunities to keep other students away from drugs. As one of 6 students to represent his current high school in the Partnership for a Drug Free America program – a program designed to get student involvement so that they can encourage other teens to stay away from drugs - he has spent multiple Saturdays over the fall obtaining valuable leadership training on how to work with and encourage his fellow students. Moving him at this time will move him out of an environment where he rooted and connected and could significantly impact the future of other children. Additionally, if forced to move he will have to give up his slot in this valuable activity eliminating his opportunity for additional leadership opportunities.

Further, because my son is on a school sanctioned ball team, we have to abide by regulations of the Alabama High School Athletic Association that state if a student that was enrolled in one school and later transfers to another school, he must sit out for a year. My son will have to sit out his junior year. Junior year is the critical year for visibility for college recruiters. First offers go out to athletes that perform well as underclassmen. Most athletes sign commitment letters before their senior season even starts. Taking this year out of his career virtually eliminates any chance he has at playing in college.

We have been told that the number of students requesting the grandfathering clause is less than 1 percent of the Huntsville City School population of over 23,000. Allowing these students to stay in their current high school doesn't appear to have an impact on the goals and objectives of the consent order and will allow families to continue on paths set in motion years ago. Please don't take away the years of hard work and dreams of this small number of students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

  
Wendy Smythe